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ABSTRACT

An internship project was developed to prepare vocational and special education teachers to train special needs learners in vocational education. The program encouraged better cooperative efforts between vocational and special educators by providing an opportunity for these teachers to consult with and learn about and from one another. During the project, 40 vocational education students and 20 special education students from the University of Pittsburgh worked directly with special needs learners for a 2-week internship in a special needs service agency or vocational school. The project coordinator visited each intern, and the director of the special needs service agency or vocational school supervised them. Each intern planned, conducted, and evaluated vocational education programs for special needs learners. Interns evaluated their teaching experience and demonstrated an increased level of confidence in their ability to work with and to teach special needs learners in vocational education and to prepare them for employment. (Author/KC)

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FINAL REPORT

THE PENNSYLVANIA VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

(Contract Number 86-8028)

Dr. Cheryl W. Steczak

University of Pittsburgh
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

July, 1988

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ABSTRACT

86-8028: The Pennsylvania Vocational Education Internship Program For Working With Special Needs Learners.

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The purpose of this project was to meet the need for the effective preparation of vocational and special teachers to train special needs learners in vocational education. The internship program was designed to encourage better cooperative efforts between vocational and special educators by providing an opportunity for these teachers to consult together and learn about (and from) one another.

Objectives

1. To provide preservice and certified vocational and special education teachers with an opportunity to work directly with special needs learners in a professionally supervised vocational experience.
2. To provide an opportunity to gain understanding and insight into the vocational world of special needs learners.
3. To provide an opportunity to learn methods and procedures related to planning, implementing and evaluating vocational programs for special needs learners.
4. To serve, in subsequent employment, as an advocate for special needs learners and to encourage others in the advocate's role.

Outcomes

1. Forty vocational education students and twenty special education students from the University of Pittsburgh worked directly with special needs learners for a two-week internship in July 1987 and June 1988 in a special needs service agency or vocational school.
2. Project coordinator visited each intern and the director of the special needs service agency or vocational school supervised each intern.
3. Each intern planned, conducted and evaluated vocational education programs for special needs learners.
4. Each intern evaluated his/her own teaching experience and demonstrated an increased level of confidence in their ability to effectively work with, and to teach, special needs learners in vocational education and to prepare them for employment.
5. An introductory presentation of the internship program was made at the Pennsylvania Vocational Education Conference on July 1, 1987.

Audience

Forty vocational education and 20 special education graduate and undergraduate sttudents from the Universitty of Pittsburgh.

Published Materials

- Article in "Mainstream" - November, 1987
- Presentation - PVEC, July, 1987
- Final Report

BACKGROUND

Vocational education teachers and special education teachers are being pressured to improve existing programs and develop new programs which will enable handicapped people to profit from vocational education. The goal of new and improved vocational programs is to increase enrollment in and completion of vocational programs by handicapped people and to enable them to learn employable skills. Pressure and encouragement to achieve this goal is coming from employers, guidance and rehabilitation counselors, parents, advocacy groups and, of course, from handicapped people.

The political and economic climate directs vocational and special educators toward this goal.

> Handicapped youth are leaving the educational system without the skills necessary to compete in the working world. Less than forty percent of all handicapped people are employed during a typical year. The average wage of those handicapped people who are employed is much lower than their nonhandicapped counterparts.[1]

Legislation passed in recent years mandates that handicapped people be given the opportunity to acquire vocational education.

> Although Public Law 98-524 (The Carl D. Perkins Act-Section 204) has set aside ten percent of the total grant for handicapped students, only two percent of the students enrolled in vocational education programs are identified as handicapped.[2]

However, Federal and State legislation, regulations implementing the legislation, and court decisions are beginning to have an effect upon the vocational education of handicapped students. Regulations which implement Public Law 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) state that:

> Each public agency shall take steps to ensure that its handicapped children have available to them the variety of educational programs and services available to nonhandicapped children - including vocational education.[3]

Vocational education is to be part of the free appropriate public education detailed in Public Law 94-142. This legislation mandates a written Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each handicapped student.

Other legislation, in the form of Public Law 93-112, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, has much to say about program and facility accessibility for handicapped students and vocational education. According to this legislation, handicapped people are to be educated with people who are not handicapped, to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the handicapped persons.

The explosions of services and public attention on behalf of handicapped individuals has not been a matter of chance. With the passing of recent legislation, there is an increasing emphasis on and demand for the education of the special needs learner in the least restrictive environment. A major response to this legislation is to provide educational programs where handicapped students can be placed in settings with nonhandicapped peers -- a policy known as mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming has been precipitated by two fundamental and interrelated actions of the Federal government.

1. Congressional passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 affirmed the inclusion of the handicapped under all civil rights guarantees derived from the Constitution. Sections 503 and 504 of the Act address the right to education and equal opportunity and non-discrimination in employment.

2. Concurrent with the aformentioned activity, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142, in 1975 and the Vocational Education Amendments, P.L. 94-482, in 1976.

One of the factors working against placing the handicapped in the regular vocational education classrooms is the vocational educators' lack of training in how to work with the handicapped. Concurrently, the special educator, in many cases, has little knowledge about vocational education. Teacher certification requirements allow imited "hands-on" opportunities for vocational teachers to obtain the skills which will enable them to be effective teachers of special needs learners and special educators. One effective means of enabling these teachers to acquire competencies in special needs vocatinal education is that of internship.

If mainstreaming is to work, it is more likely to work if vocational educators and special educators cooperatively plan that least restrictive environment. A collaboratively planned, hands-on internship experience must reflect reasoned planning for establishing such an environment.

Definition of Terms

The terms handicapped and disadvantaged are defined as in the Carl D. Perkins Act (p.L. 98-524).

Handicapped: Persons who are mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, blind or partially sighted, deaf or hard of hearing, orthopedically disabled, speech impaired, or other health impaired persons who by reason of their impairment require special education and related services.

Disadvantaged: Persons who are economically or academically impaired as a result of poor economic circumstance and/or socio-cultural conditions which cause them not to be able to succeed in the classroom without special intervention.

Special Needs Learners: Students who are classified as being either handicapped or disadvantaged.

Intern: A full-time student at the University of Pittsburgh - certified or prosective vocational or special education - who participated in one of two internship experiences on a full-time basis for two weeks during July, 1987 or June, 1988.

ENDNOTES

[1]Redick, Ronald L., Sharon S. Redick. "Teaching Students with Special Needs". Vocational Instruction, 1980 Yearbook of the American Vocational Association. Arlington, VA: The American Vocational Association, Inc. 1985, pp. 7-10.

[2]Phelps, L. Allen and Ronald J. Lutz. Career Exploration and Preparation for the Special Needs Learner. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1981, pp. 3-5.

[3]Brolin, Donn, "Career Education for Persons with Handicaps", The Personnel and Guidance Journal, December 1984, pp. 258-262.

METHODS

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Vocational Education arranged for prospective and certified vocational teachers and special education teachers to engage in a teacher exchange. Vocational teachers observed and taught in a special needs setting while, concurrently, special education teachers were placed in local AVTS programs for two weeks.

Objectives

The objectives of the internship program were:

1. to provide preservice and certified vocational and special education teachers with an opportunity to work directly with special needs learners in a professionally supervised vocational experience.
2. To provide an opportunity to gain understanding and insight into the vocational world of special needs learners.
3. To provide an oportunity to learn methods and procedures related to planning, implementing and evaluating vocational programs for special needs learners.
4. To serve, in subsequent employment, as an advocate for special needs learners and to encourage others in the advocate's role.

Completed Activities

The Pennsylvania Vocational Education Internship Program for Working with Spcial Needs Learners Project was designed to provide vocational and special educators with the competencies necessary for developing vocational training programs and employment opportunities for handicapped and disadvantaged populations. The individual teacher worked directly with special needs learners for two weeks (July, 1987 or June, 1988) in a professionally supervised experience to plan, implement and evaluate curriculum materials and processes for successful integration of the special needs learner into vocational education and employment.

The two internship workshops were coordinated by Dr. Cheryl W. Steczak. Mr. Fred Enck, United Cerebral Palsy; Dr. John Connolly, Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Dr. Susan Seabreeze, Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf; Miss Alice Carter, Western Pennsylvania Blind Associatiton; Mr. Al Fascetti, Connelly Skill Learning Center and Dr. Linda Groski, Forbes Road East AVTS servied as liaisons for the internship placements at their respective schools/service agency.

An individualized program of work for each of 60 interns was developed under the direct supervision of Dr. Cheryl W. Steczak, Institute of Practice and Research in Education, University of Pittsburgh and the Director of the special needs service agency or vocational school where the intern served. Teacher recruitment targets were: 40 vocational education teachers and

20 special education teachers, the latter were recruited with the assistance of Dr. June Mullins, Special Education Department, University of Pittsburgh.

Internship Placement

Orientation was held in the Vocational Education Department at the University of Pittsburgh for each of the two workshops, (July, 1987 and June, 1988). After the Day 1 orientation, interns worked for eight days from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day in the following agencies or schools in the Pittsburgh area. All of the cooperating agencies enthusiastically agreed to this cooperative effort:

Special Education Teachers

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Oakland
- Forbes Road East AVTS, Monroeville
- Connelly Skill Center, Pittsburgh

Voctionl Education Teachers

- United Cerebral Palsy, Oakland
- Western PA School for the Deaf, Oakland
- Western PA Blind Assoc., Oakland

Day 10 was a capstone program, held in the Vocational Education Department at the University of Pittsburgh, to give the interns the opportunity to share their experiences and reinforce their learning experience. Participants were eligible to earn three optional University credits toward undergraduate or graduate certification.

Evaluation

The true success of any training for the teacher must be measured in terms of accomplishing the personal and career goals of the program. Towards those goals the following evalution was conducted:

1. The program coordinator and school/agency director evaluated the progress of each participant periodically throughout their internship.
2. Each intern completed a written evaluation of the internship program. (See Appendices A and B)
3. A final evaluation of the entire vocational special needs training program was written by staff members. Recommendations were considered for subsequent years of continuing the internship for vocational and special educators.

This evaluation indicted the Pennsylvania vocational Education Internship Program for Working with Special Needs Learners produced a positive reaction to teaching the disabled student. All participants could better understand the handicapped student's condition or problem through the effects of hands-on opportunities to meet and teach these individuals.

Problems

No problems were encountered.

CONCLUSIONS

Vocational and Special Education teachers cannot accomplish the huge task of modifying vocational curricula in their separate disciplines alone. Two of the most common concerns these instructors expressed when teaching special needs students vocational education were the feeling that they do not have an adequate educational background for working with the special needs learner, and the worry that they cannot devote enough time to these individuals without neglecting the rest of their class. Evaluation, curriculum, and teaching strategies appropriate for the vocational special needs learner were frequent question marks that require new "hands-on" experiences for these educators. If mainstreaming is to be accomplished, vocational and special educators must learn to cooperatively work together to resolve many of the above concerns in their local education community.

This internship served as a model of service delivery to remove some of the hesitations for vocational training and employment of the special needs learners. These interns learned to emphasize each student's abilities rather than disabilities, which resulted in new ideas in program design for their "home" schools. Finally, the interns served as role models to assist local/state vocational adminstrators and special needs supervisors in providing models of vocational service delivery to meet the needs of the vocational special needs population.

The internship workshop was well received by the participants. Many felt it was a most worthwhile adjunct experience to student teaching. The participants' reaction was that additional training is needed for vocational and special education teachers. Participants enjoyed the idea exchange on instructional methods, visual aids, and problem solving techniques that have worked for them in dealing with handicapped students. Participants expressed an interest in having more vocational internship experiences with the disabled.

APPENDICES

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Vocational Education

Appendix A

THE PENNSYLVANIA VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
FOR WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

July, 1987 and June, 1988

EXIT EVALUATION

Your occupaton: _____ Prospective teacher (please list area) _____
_____ Teacher (please list area) _____
_____ Supervisor (please list area) _____
_____ Coordinator (please list area) _____

Please circle the number that indicates your response. Use the following scale: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree NA = Not Applicable

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
1. This internship provided instruction needed to develop my knowledge about vocational education for the handicapped.	4	3	2	1	0
2. This internship provided information about teaching methods and equipment modifications to accommodate handicapped students in vocational education.	4	3	2	1	0
3. This internship provided information about the vocational education resources and materials available in Pennsylvania to aid in program development for the handicapped.	4	3	2	1	0
4. This intership provided practical "hands-on" opportunities to learn about actual handicapping conditions.	4	3	2	1	0
5. This internship provided instruction needed to help me develop a more positive attitude toward teaching handicapped students in my vocational education classroom.	4	3	2	1	0
6. This internship provided opportunity for exploration/sharing of successful teaching techniques for the handicapped.	4	3	2	1	0
7. As a result of this internship, I will be more comfortable teaching the handicapped in vocational education.	4	3	2	1	0
8. Overall, I would rate this internship as useful.	4	3	2	1	0

9. Additional comments:

10. Recommendations for future internships:

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
EXIT EVALUATION

THE PENNSYLVANIA VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INTERSHIP PROGRAM
FOR WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

July, 1987 and June, 1988

N = 60

AREA OF PRESENTATION	EFFECTIVENESS					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Did Not Answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A. Sensitivity Training Workshop						
1. Provide instruction needed	81.2	18.8	-	-	-	-
2. Provide information about methods	90.8	9.2	-	-	-	-
3. Provide information about resources	85.4	14.6	-	-	-	-
4. Provide practical "hands-on"	98.2	1.8	-	-	-	-
5. Provide instruction for more positive attitude toward teaching	87.6	12.4	-	-	-	-
6. Provide opportunity for exploration/sharing of successful teaching	86.3	13.7	-	-	-	-
7. I will be more comfortable teaching the handicapped	83.5	16.5	-	-	-	-
8. Rate this internship as useful	90.8	9.2	-	-	-	-

B. Additional Comments:

Very good internship program
Have more
Do again
Learned more than in my student teaching experience